

# Chignik Lagoon

## People and Place

### Location

Chignik Lagoon is located on the south shore of the Alaska Peninsula, 450 miles southwest of Anchorage. It lies 180 air miles south of King Salmon, 8.5 miles west of Chignik, and 16 miles east of Chignik Lake. The three Chignik communities are clustered off the south side of Chignik Bay. Chignik Lagoon took its name from its location and proximity to Chignik. Chignik is the Koniag (Sugpiaq) word for “big wind.” The area encompasses 13.1 square miles of land and no water area.

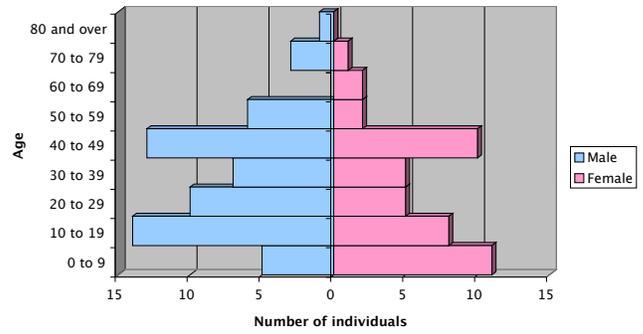
### Demographic Profile

Chignik Lagoon had 102 inhabitants in 2000 according to the U.S. Census. The racial composition of Chignik Lagoon was: 81.6% Alaska Native or American Indian, 11.7% White, 1% Black, and 2.9% belonged to two or more races. A total of 82.5% of the population recognized themselves as all or part Alaska Native or American Indian. In 2000, this was a very young community with a median age of 26.3 years, versus the U.S. median of 35.3 years. A significant percentage of the population (23.8%) was under 19 years of age. As with many Alaskan communities, males outnumbered females, 57.3% to 42.7%.

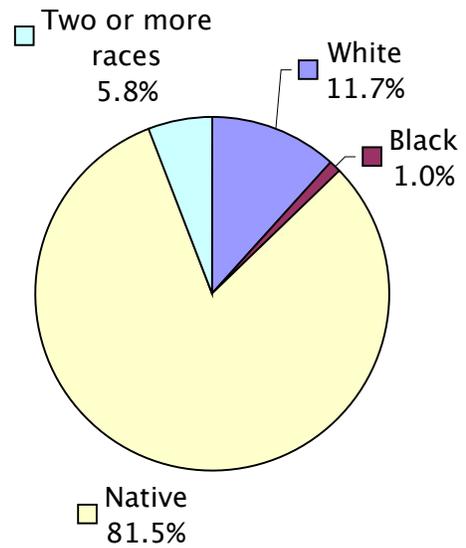
Chignik Lagoon’s demographics vary by season. Although it is hard to make accurate estimates of the transient population, different accounts seem to confirm that during the fishing season the village increases its population by several hundred. Permanent residents of the village lived in 33 households. Most of the summer residents lived in the 35 otherwise vacant houses in the community and in boats offshore.

Chignik Lagoon does not show up in the U.S. Census until the 1960s. A number of communities on the Peninsula and the Islands have had important levels of mobility due to high seismic activity in the area. In any case, the 80s and the 90s showed a relatively unchanged population ranging from 40 to 50 inhabitants. In 2000, however, the population almost doubled in size since the last count. Of the population 25 years of age and over, about 70% had graduated from high school and gone on to further schooling, and 12% had obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher. About 30% had not graduated from high school.

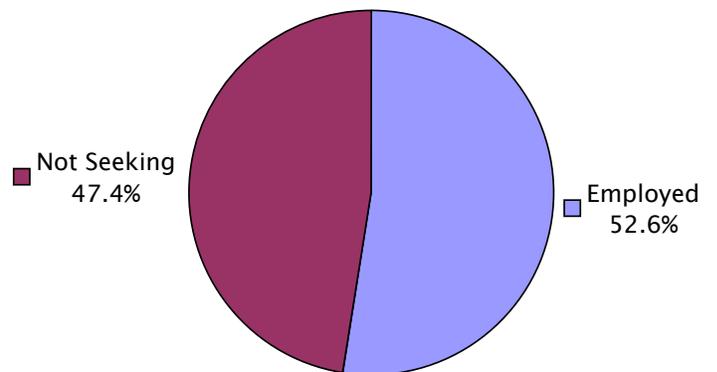
**2000 Population Structure  
Chignik Lagoon**  
Data source: US Census



**2000 Racial Structure  
Chignik Lagoon**  
Data source: US Census



**2000 Hispanic Ethnicity  
Chignik Lagoon**  
Data source: US Census



## History

The history of Chignik Lagoon, as with other aspects of the community, cannot be detached from the history of the whole Bay. Although the U.S. Census does not mention Chignik Lagoon until the 1960s, the area, as evident from a nearly 2,000 year-old site near Chignik, has long been populated. The Chignik area was originally populated by Kaniagmuit Eskimos. After the Russian occupation, intermarriage between Kaniags and Aleuts (Unangan) produced the Koniags.

The Russian era, the 18th century, had a deep impact on the area: a village was destroyed (Kaniagmiut), others moved or were ravaged by disease or warfare, sea mammal populations were decimated during the 'golden age' of the fur trade, and the Russian Orthodox Church became part of the local heritage. The Native population decreased to half of its pre-contact size at the same time that the population began to include high numbers of Russian and Scandinavian fishermen.

In spite of recent increases in population, Chignik Lagoon remains largely a summer camp for hundreds of fisher folk. A fundamental factor that helped to consolidate a permanent population in the area was the succession of canneries and processing plants that came to the area throughout the course of the 20th century.

## Infrastructures

### Current Economy

More than half of Chignik Lagoon's workforce is involved in the fishing industry, specifically the salmon fishery. Chignik is famous for its sockeye runs and the community is very dependant on its salmon fleet. Chignik Lagoon has become a regional fishing center with the combined influences of Chignik Bay and Chignik Lake.

In 2000, 29 residents held fishing permits. There is a seafood preparation and packaging company, the Chignik Kipper. There are two on-shore processing plants operating in the vicinity of Chignik (Aleutian Dragon Fisheries and Chignik Pride). However, the primary year-round employers are the village council, the electric plant, and the school. In 2000, the community had 19 governmental workers. From the potential total workforce, 52.6% were employed and the remaining 47.4% were not seeking jobs.

The per capita income in the community was \$28,940 and a very high \$92,297 in median household income. Only a 1.8% of the population lived below the line of poverty. Subsistence activities like fishing, hunting, and gathering were still a significant part of the local economy.

## Governance

Chignik Lagoon is an unincorporated village located in the Lake and Peninsula Borough. The Bristol Bay Native Corporation is the regional Native corporation, while the Chignik Lagoon Corporation is the local corporation managing approximately 96,000 acres. The Chignik Lagoon Village Council is recognized by the BIA as a traditional council.

This community is part of the Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation (BBEDC) and receives community development quotas (CDQ) from this organization. This community also benefits from a regional nonprofit organization, the Bristol Bay Native Association.

Although only open seasonally, the closest Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) offices are located in Chignik and Port Moller. Sand Point or Kodiak hold the closest permanent ADF&G offices. In order to access to a Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) office, inhabitants of Chignik Lagoon have to get in touch with Kodiak, Unalaska, or Anchorage. The nearest National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) offices are in Kodiak, Unalaska, or Homer.

## Facilities

Chignik Lagoon is primarily accessible by air and sea. There are no roads connecting it to other villages, although there is strong regional interest in constructing roads in the area connecting Chignik, Chignik Lagoon, Chignik Lake, and the landfill.

There is a State-owned gravel airstrip and seaplane base. There are scheduled flights operated by Peninsula Airways as well as charters that connect the town to others, mainly nearby King Salmon. Because of the length of the airstrip, only small aircraft can take-off and land at Chignik Lagoon. The price of a roundtrip ticket by plane from Anchorage, with a connection in King Salmon is \$752. There is also a small boat harbor. The State ferry provides service four times a year. A cargo ship brings supplies weekly in the summer and bi-weekly in the winter. Boat haul-outs

are available. Local transportation is mostly via ATVs and skiffs. Although limited, there are car rentals and accommodations for visitors.

There is no police service. Basic health care is provided by the Chignik Lagoon Health Clinic and the Chignik Lagoon First Responder Group. The Chignik Lagoon Council owns and operates its water, sewer, and power systems. There is also an incinerator and landfill for garbage disposal. The town has its own school, the Chignik Lagoon School, with 22 students, 5 teachers, and a gym. The community has a collective power provider, Chignik Lagoon Power Utility, piped sewage, and a piped water system mostly operated by the village council.

## Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

### Commercial Fishing

The importance of commercial fishing for the Chignik Lagoon community cannot be understood without taking into account the combination of the employment-businesses-fleet structure of the three Chigniks combined.

According to ADF&G records for 2000, Chignik Lagoon had 29 commercial permit holders, with a total of 70 permits across all fisheries. In Chignik Lagoon, 53 individuals were registered as crewmen and there were 9 federal fisheries vessel owners plus 18 owners of salmon vessels. The Chignik Lagoon fleet was involved in most of the Alaskan fisheries: crab, halibut, herring, other groundfish, other shellfish, and salmon.

The permits issued for Alaskan fisheries are specific to species, size of vessel, type of gear, and fishing area.

*Halibut:* There were five issued permits pertaining to halibut fisheries. Four permits were fished, all of them for longline vessels over 60 feet in statewide waters.

*Groundfish:* Groundfish had the highest number of permits: 30 permits for 19 holders (8 fished). The community had one permit for a hand troll vessel (not fished), 12 for vessels under 60 feet with pot gear (6 fished), 14 for mechanical jig, 2 for longline vessels over 60 feet (none fished), and one for pot gear over 60 feet. All these permits were for statewide waters.

*Salmon:* The salmon fleet was also very significant to Chignik Lagoon's commercial fisheries, accounting for 22 permits (21 fished): all were purse seine, 21

restricted to Chignik, and one restricted to the Kodiak waters.

*Other:* One Dungeness crab permit was issued for a pot gear vessel over 60 feet. Other fisheries in Chignik Lagoon included herring and other shellfish: the former included 10 permits, from which only one for herring roe with purse seine in Bristol Bay was actually fished (two herring roe with purse seine in Kodiak, four herring roe with purse seine in Chignik and four herring roe with purse seine in Bristol Bay). Two issued permits that were fished: they both related to the combined category of octopus and squid (one permit for a longline and one for a pot gear, both of them over 60 feet and statewide range).

Besides the two fish processing plants operating in neighboring Chignik, Chignik Lagoon had its own seafood preparation and packing plant, Chignik Kipper. Although Chignik Lagoon had a fleet anchored in its waters, there was no real landing of fish due to the absence of a large processing plant. This lack pushes the vessels of this community to deliver somewhere else, probably Chignik Bay.

In 2003, the Lake and Peninsula Borough received an allocation of \$442,002 in federal salmon disaster funds to compensate for losses due to salmon prices plummeting, and \$29,832 to reduce the impact of Steller sea lion protective regulations. The BBEDC also received \$75,026 for this reason. The funds, added to the general budget of the borough or the CDQ, helped to compensate for the decline in fish taxes income and to relieve budget tensions for institutions in the area.

### Sport Fishing

In 2000 this community did not issue any sport fishing permits. The area, though, is visited by numerous non-residents that get their permits elsewhere. Locals rely on subsistence fisheries. The village had three business licenses issued for fishing guide enterprises, and two licenses for fishing activities.

### Subsistence Fishing

In 1989 Chignik Lagoon demonstrated the significance of subsistence practices for traditional Alaska communities. All households participated in the use of harvested resources. In relation to the main marine resources: 100% of the households used salmon, 100% used other fish (herring, smelt, cod, halibut, rockfish, sablefish, char, and trout), 13.3% used marine mammals, and 86.7% used marine

invertebrates. The results reflect that the inhabitants of the community were harvesting an average of 211.4 lbs of subsistence resources per person per year.

In order to understand the relative importance of each resource it is useful to break down the composition of the harvest: salmon 47.4%, other fish 21%, land mammals 17.3%, marine mammals 0, birds and eggs 2.5%, marine invertebrates 9.8% and vegetation 2%.

In this community, most of this subsistence practices are focused on fish: in 1999 Chignik Lagoon had 32

Alaska salmon household subsistence permits: the catch was mainly sockeye. In addition, the inhabitants of this community (rural residents or members of an Alaska Native tribe) are eligible to harvest subsistence halibut by holding Subsistence Halibut Registration Certificates (SHARCs). These allocations are based on recognized customary and traditional uses of halibut. Regulations to implement subsistence halibut fishing were published in the Federal Register in April 2003 and became effective May 2003.